

Why Bother (About) Architecture? Contemporary Art, Architecture and the Museum.

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In November 2004, the Spanish artist Santiago Sierra intervened in the Museum Dhondt Dhaenens in Deurle, Belgium. In line with his reputation of being one of the most controversial contemporary artists, he made both a simple and a radical gesture. He took out all the artworks from the museum space and then removed all the glass from exterior doors and windows. The museum was stripped to the bone, reduced to a bare structure, where wind and rain had free reign. Sierra has a record of these kind of drastic acts against architecture. For his contribution to the Venice Biennial in 2003, he had the main entrance of the Spanish pavilion walled up. To the visitors' indignation, Sierra re-routed the entry via a dreary back door that was guarded by a Spanish police officer who only allowed passage to those who could present a valid Spanish passport. The handful of visitors who were able to comply were confronted with nothing but empty rooms inside. In Kunsthau Bregenz, he loaded the upper floor of the building with 300 tons of bricks. The work *300 Tonnen, 300 Tons* pushed the loading capacity of the KUB structure to the limit, to such an extent that the weight had to be dispersed by pillars on the lower floors. In all three of these cases, architecture - and by extension first and foremost the art institution that it houses - was tested in its capacity to endure artistic intrusion. Whether the injured building is laid bare, locked, or put under pressure, the institution is incapable of functioning in a regular manner, or *in extremis*, any further. Sierra's interventions fit within the fairly recent tradition of symbolic and ever more violent gestures on architecture, and on the architecture of the museum institution in particular, starting with Yves Le Klein's "Le Vide" (1958), Armand's "Le Plein" (1960), Daniel Buren's sealing of the entrance of the Galleria Apollinaire (1968), Robert Barry's "During the exhibition the gallery will be closed" (1969), Michael Asher's removal of the windows of the Clocktower New York (1976), Gordon Matta-Clark's "window blow-out" in the New York Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (1976), Chris Burden's "Exposing the Foundations of the Museum" in the Temporary Contemporary in Los Angeles (1986) to more recent intrusions such as Ingmar & Dragset's "Taking Place" in the Kunsthalle Zurich (2001) to Kendell Geers' blowing up of a temporary Wall in the Antwerp Museum of Contemporary Art (The Devil never rests ... (6 June 2004)).¹ Since the 1960s, architecture is incessantly perceived and deemed

as an instance to be acted *against*. Architecture is regarded as the discipline and practice that represents and enforces the system – its institutions and the social order – and needs therefore to be put on trial, pierced, cut, demolished, split, torn apart, etcetera. Architecture gives form and identity to institutions, and is therefore the most exquisite target to be able to attack them. By intervening on architectural elements such as doors, windows, stairs or foundations that define and make up the space of the institution, the institutional conditioning of that interior can be assailed, questioned, and ultimately discussed. But haven't these kind of gestures had their day? After decades of all sorts of attacks on the museum and its architecture, aren't we yet convinced of the fatal role that architecture plays within the constitution of the museum; that is, delimiting, fixing and affirming the boundaries of the institution? Haven't these kind of assaults on architecture merely become pathetic and hysterical? Is architecture still the most appropriate target to critically re-evaluate the museum, and by extension, institutions for contemporary art in general? If we follow Benjamin Buchloh's statement that every artistic practice needs to develop a critical attitude towards architecture, then how are we to define the nature of that criticality?² Within the vital reflection on new stages for contemporary art, is architecture still an instance to bother, or rather to bother about?

In May 2003, a conference entitled *Museum in Motion* was held at the arts centre *De Balie* in Amsterdam, after the seminal book *Museum in Motion?* of 1979 edited by Carel Blotkamp.³ The book of 1979 and the conference of 2003 were launched under comparable circumstances. The book was published upon the occasion of the departure of director Jean Leering from the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. Leering's direction of the museum was considered so influential that it merited review. The year 2003 saw three very similar cases: the directors of the most important Dutch museums of modern and contemporary art were about to leave: Rudi Fuchs from the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Jan Debbaut from the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven and, Chris Dercon from the Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam.⁴ This collective exodus was experienced as both urgent and promising. After all, new directors always get things moving, they set things "in motion". They come up with fresh ideas, take a new direction, and reform the existing institution. Or at least, that's what they are expected to do. A new director who merely continues the policy of his predecessor is readily accused of having neither personality nor vision. However, the "fresh wind" a new director gets to blow through the institution is often translated into building ambitions. The construction of a new wing or a brand-new building – and most of

all, the fund-raising that such an enterprise requires – are increasingly considered as one of the most important achievements of a directorship. The irony of the situation in the Netherlands (at the time of the 2003 “Museum in Motion” conference) was that two of the three directors were leaving just after they finished a major, and in both cases, very strenuous and demanding building process: Debbaut at the Vanabbe and Dercon at the Boijmans. While the third, Rudi Fuchs of the Amsterdam Stedelijk, partly resigned because of the desperate dead-end situation of the planned extension project. All three directors were thus engaged in what Stephen E. Weil once aptly described as the “edifice complex” of the contemporary museum world.⁵ In recent decades, just about every museum has drastically renovated, expanded or added to the existing building, at least once.⁶ After all, building plans for museums create high expectations. Although architecture is stable, fixed by nature and thus motionless, museums seem to look upon it as the most appropriate medium to break new ground. Architecture is the medium *par excellence* to redefine and re-articulate their institutional position as well as their attitude. In the countless plans for additions and extensions, museum directors are seldom satisfied with making more space available, or just renovating the existing premises. On the contrary, with every museum building enterprise – whether an extension, an additional wing or a brand-new building – they explicitly express the ambition to tackle the “institutional” space as well. Architecture is used as a vehicle to fundamentally re-think the museum on both a micro and a macro level – not only the commissioning institution itself, but the entire concept of “the museum” as well. Architecture is capable – or so we are made to believe – of extending the museum’s boundaries in both the literal and figurative senses. Thus, while preparing the recently finished renovation of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Glen D. Lowry claimed that the project would entail more than an expansion of the existing facilities; the museum would “fundamentally alter its space.”⁷ Whenever a museum starts to build, it pretends to do more than give itself a facelift, an implant, a correction, or an “enlargement”, to use beauty industry jargon. The phantasmagorical desire that the restyling of your body will guarantee a better and more rewarding life – epitomised by such television programmes as “Extreme Makeover” on ABC, “Beautiful” on VT4 or “I Want a Famous Face” on MTV – would seem to have infected museums and their directors too.

But what are the results this general quest for fundamentally new spatial concepts for the museum? From the *Nene Staatsgalerie*, the Groninger Museum, Guggenheim Bilbao, Milwaukee Art Museum to Tate Modern, we have been regaled with the most diverse and spectacular

architectural appearances, ranging from museums that look like hospitals, prisons, jewel boxes, spacecraft, offices, and even all sorts of fishes. But has this architectural extravaganza offered a similar amount of thought-provoking institutional structures in exchange? In other words, did these buildings “imply”, bring about, even provoke totally different museum policies? Did all these exquisite *bodies* generate an equivalent amount of innovative and pioneering institutional *personalities*?

Upon closer scrutiny of the kaleidoscopic collection of new museums and museum extensions of the last three decades, we must admit that, despite the euphoric, exhilarated tone of the discourse on museum architecture, very few genuinely innovative museum projects – with the same kind of combined architectural and institutional vigour as the Centre Pompidou, the eminent start of the so-called museum boom – have been completed. Few actual building projects, if none at all, have succeeded in setting the traditional museum typology – architectural as well as institutional – “in motion”. Yoshio Taniguchi’s rebuilding of the Museum of Modern Art in New York may be the largest and most expensive museum building enterprise of the last decades, but it certainly does not convey a substantial breakthrough in our thinking about contemporary museum space, let alone the fundamental spatial alteration that was envisioned and promised – unless in terms of surface and scale, of course.

The rather thin crop is due to the paradoxical position architecture is forced to occupy within a museum commission on the one hand, and to the rather elliptical discourse on museum architecture on the other. Despite all the rhetoric, architecture has rarely been permitted to intervene in the actual spatial development of the museum programme.⁸ All too often, the ambition to use architecture to rethink the museum’s programme and, by consequence, to develop a novel spatial framework to house that programme, is paradoxically shattered in the name of flexibility or programmatic freedom. Museums, with the museum of contemporary art as the absolute champion, simply do not allow architecture to get in the way of their ambitions.

The museum of contemporary art wants to be at the absolute service of art and artists, so it is troubled by an almost paranoid desire for an architecture that is receptive, adaptable, and adjustable, or, in other words, flexible. But here we face the first paradox. Although architecture is compelled to apply the strategy of self-effacement, it must simultaneously address itself to helping

the museum overcome its problems with art. Because after all – as it was defined as the core problem of the *Museum in Motion?* Book of 1979 – art causes the museum a lot of trouble. Since the 1960's, art has drastically altered its nature and strategies: it has become ever more agile, critical toward the institutional framework of the museum, and eager to operate on more specific sites. The museum of contemporary art wants to keep up pace, but is confronted with spatial, institutional, and socio-political problems and limitations. It suffers from the unhappy conscience that it is never able to occupy a true place in the artistic present, as it always “frames” art. This identity crisis incites the museum to indulge in ongoing self-critique, institutional introspection, and ultimately, self-denial. In recent decades, we have been confronted with dozens of museums that, following the artists, contest their own space and develop an anti-museum policy, some even going so far as to pretend to stop being a museum. The nature of this crisis, however, is fundamentally spatial. A quick glance at the metaphors used by museums to question their status, reveals the architectural bias of the crisis; if the museum of contemporary art wants to transform itself from a static *repository* for the art of the past into a dynamic *workshop* for the art of the present, it has to tear down its walls, open up its space, leave the premises, push back its frontiers, etc. Both the words “repository” and “workshop” imply a different spatial, and hence, architectural connotation. So it seems that architecture ended up in a quite ambiguous position; while it is obliged to refrain from intervention or mediation in the museum programme and is expected to produce so-called flexible and neutral spaces, it is nevertheless always put at stake within the critical questioning of that programme.

When Marcel Broodthaers was asked in an interview what space hid, he compared that pursuit to the children's game “*Lou es-tu là*”.⁹ The relentless search for fundamental spatial alteration or the continuous drive to redefine the space of the museum amounts to nothing but a phoney game of hide-and-seek, merely a desperate attempt to deny the institutional conditioning of the museum interior. This search does nothing but obscure the essence of art: its institutional encompassment and its resulting reification. The inexorable quest for new concepts of museum space is just a misleading game in which the players – artists, museum staff, but also architects – go to great pains to evade the true answer. Continuously, architecture is asked to meet the problematic desires of museums and other art institutions. They believe that architecture will enable them to transform themselves from a motionless stock into a vibrant workplace, from a place of passive spectatorship into a locus of active and animated cultural production, into an institution that is

ultimately as un-institutional as possible. This ambition was achieved, both fiercely and tragically, in the Centre Pompidou. The building tried to deliver a solution for the unpredictable development – the spatial and exhibition requirements of the contemporary work of art - and express the image of a popular and iconoclastic art institution. And as Reyner Banham once remarked, it drove that question so far that it elliptically handed it back.¹⁰ It is therefore not surprising that the Centre Pompidou was not only experienced as “too flexible”, but that its immense popularity also meant it was worn bare within nearly two decades.

Although many international examples of purpose-built museums of modern and contemporary art could be regarded as praiseworthy responses to the innovative manifesto of Piano & Rogers, they could never rival its – albeit extremely problematic – radicality. None of the icons of the recent museum frenzy – such as the Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, the Getty Center in Los Angeles, The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Bilbao, or Tate Modern – are truly innovative projects. On the contrary, most investment has been done, in one way or the other, in what Alma Wittlin could still categorise in 1970 as “peripheral functions”.¹¹ Whereas the core programme of the museum – the conservation, study and presentation of artefacts – used to take up about 90% of the total surface of museums, this has shrunk to a mere 50%. In the post-Pompidou era, about every museum has an elaborate gift shop, a fancy restaurant, a well-equipped concert hall or movie theatre, and in extreme cases, even a supermarket or shopping mall. The classic museum programme is seldom the key element of a building operation. Indeed, art museums are built for various reasons, few of them to do with art. What this means for architecture is that attention is now focused chiefly on the way it gives shape to this external programme. A museum design is no longer assessed primarily in terms of its intrinsic museological qualities, but on its response to the external programming package: whether it provides the city with a landmark, how it fits into the cityscape, whether it adds value to the surrounding urban fabric, stimulates city planning, distributes the museum’s different peripheral functions in an interesting manner, and so on and so forth. All these kind of design qualities have their importance, as they situate the role of museum buildings within a broader socio-economic, urban, and political context. Nevertheless, they demand evaluation criteria that, in a sense, are entirely detached from the assumed fundamental institutional change. They do not provide any new insight into the way in which the museum can function as a stage for contemporary art, and ultimately, the form that the museum – as an arsenal of memory – could or ought to take. They

may result in a building that – as the Guggenheim Bilbao – functions as the icon, sign, and logo of a city, all at once, but no longer cares about what's being shown inside, whether motorcycles, Armani costumes, or artworks. The building takes care of the spectacle. When you visit the website of the Guggenheim Bilbao, the first heading you can click in is “the building”, the second is “the exhibitions”, and the third and last is “the permanent collection”.

But maybe the design of these gaudy sculptures – the audio guide of the Guggenheim Bilbao event wants you to believe that the building has erotic qualities, as brilliantly “performed” by Andrea Fraser in “Little Frank and His Carp” (2001) – is the only challenge that is left for architecture within future museum commissions. A quarter of a century after the publication of the *Museum in ¿Motion?* book, the situation has drastically changed. Museums are no longer confronted with the same problems as at the beginning of the 1970's. The critical questions – graphically represented by the double question mark – that the editors of the book in 1970 were still able to ask, and the answers that the museum officials, artists, critics, theoreticians, and academics tried to formulate, have now been completely superseded by the contemporary state and conditions of the art world. At the beginning of this new millennium, the eventual mobility and liveability of the museum is no longer a point of discussion; the critical relationship between art and museum even less.

The core of the present museum discussion is simply not occupied by art anymore. Whoever thinks that it is still art that brings the museum in an awkward position is terribly naïve. Museums no longer feel impotent or helpless towards art that critiques the institution, leaves, or even destroys, the building, or asks for help for large-scale and complicated projects.¹² Quite the contrary, the former rebels have been domesticated; they are welcomed with the greatest cordiality, and almost cuddled to death. William Rubin was quite accurate when he warned artists, as early as 1974, that they'd better be warier of the open arms than of the closed doors of museums.¹³ But it's too late. The willingness of museums to go along with so-called “transgressive” artistic adventures is limitless. They have made them merely “part of the program” as they are estimated to enhance their credibility and guarantee their reputation of being rebellious, critical and controversial. Nowadays, it is hard to find a museum that does not function as a platform for contemporary art – even scientific or history museums nowadays invite contemporary artists to mess around in their collection and exhibition spaces. In October 2000,

when The Museum of Modern Art in New York converted The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden into a staging area for the construction of the Museum's new building, the museum itself invited the artist Mark Dion to perform a series of archaeological excavations. Museums have adopted the critical strategies of artists to such an extent that they pretend to share the same interests. As a result, the space of the museum – and by extension the role of architecture – is no longer brought up for any real discussion, unless within self-deceptive, tragicomic and narcissistic gestures – on both an artistic and institutional level – such as those of Dion and Sierra. While the so-called exploratory intervention of the first and the violent action of the latter still pretend to question the museum space by hassling architecture, they simply profit from the institution's sadomasochistic desire to be subjected to it.

This dramatic shift in the position and attitude of the museum has serious ramifications for architecture, and especially for architectural design and practice. The institutional problem and complementary desire that lay, for example, at the basis of Centre Pompidou, and that were consequently translated into the building brief, have simply dissolved. The flexible attitude towards contemporary art that the museum aspired to and that architecture was supposed to frame, has become standard procedure. But this major shift has happened without, almost in spite of architecture. It is no longer up to architecture to develop an operational form for the institutional programme, to *design* a building that embodies it. Quite the contrary, as museums are convinced that they function as workshops, architecture is forced into a position of mere accommodation, *once more*. And thus we end up with the paradoxical call for flexibility *again*. Or, the other option – one that, since a decade or so, is considered by many as the hottest trend in museum design – is the plea for minimalist and loft-like interiors.¹⁴ The strategy to reconvert former factories and industrial buildings into museums – with famous examples as the Temporary Contemporary in Los Angeles, Tate Modern, and, more recently, Dia:Beacon – is the new paragon of architectural self-effacement, and is therefore often regarded as the true alternative for the architectural extravaganza. This strategy, however, often amounts to either a fetishistic glorification of raw and often large spaces, or a cosmetic persiflage of a historic spatial paradigm of artistic production. It is based on the false and too easy assumption that the museum, in order to function as a space of artistic production, needs to adapt the guise of that space that is historically considered paradigmatic for it.¹⁵

But does this mean that there is no critical space left for architecture in museum design? Is there no vital role and significance to discern anymore for contemporary architecture within the construction of future museums? Is the only thing architects are still allowed to do, to put their signature at the entrance, as Hans Hollein did already more than two decades ago in the Museum Abteiberg? Has architecture failed so dramatically that it is now being forced into a mere subservient and benign position? A museum may still be one of the most prestigious commissions an architect can get, but is it as challenging as it used to be, or is said to be? Isn't it quite an exaggeration to declare that museums are "seismographs of architectural culture"?¹⁶ They may generate architectural discourse, but is it really the discourse that represents the most avant-garde practices in architectural theory and practice?

Maybe the issue is not that much of an architectural, but rather of an institutional nature. Yet, it is time to question the assumption that contemporary art needs a new museum typology of its own, a typology that first on an institutional and then on an architectural level corresponds to its strategies of production, and facilitates them as well. Do we, as Hans-Ulrich Obrist suggested in an interview with Cedric Price, really need to invent "a certain type of institution" *again*?¹⁷ The museum concept is, as William Rubin stated in 1974, not infinitely expandable, let alone that it would be endlessly renewable. The ambition to rethink the museum has become so compulsory that it is on the verge of becoming preposterous. The fact that many – artists, curators as well as critics – find it necessary to batter the museum over and over again, is entirely wretched. Why do they still consider the museum as an enemy-institution? It is a sign of total idiocy to think that within the reflection on new stages for contemporary art, one first and foremost has to finish with the museum. As Thomas Keenan rightly pointed out, being critical about the museum does not imply that one needs to demolish it. What difference does it make that the critique takes place in this very place, the museum, the place they seek to contest? The challenges are far-reaching, but they do not simply proclaim that the museum is finished. The question of what museums might be "for" testifies to a certain fidelity to it.¹⁸ The boundaries and possibilities are always subject to precisely the renegotiation it seeks to render possible, by virtue of its publicity.

Moreover, the traditional tasks of conserving, studying, and presenting artworks haven't lost their (public) relevance at all. Contemporary cultural production is no longer static and slowly evolving as in the 19th century, but almost totally commercialised, fleeting and mediatized. Within a society

that is reigned by short-term agendas, instant memories, temporary regimes, provisional programmes, ephemeral networks, and impermanent flows, the traditional – some may call it old-fashioned, even conservative – programme of preservation and memory has become even more important than before. But, as Charles Esche stated so blatantly at the *Museum in Motion* conference in 2003 in Amsterdam: the management and presentation of a collection is simply not all that exciting, while the production of exhibitions with contemporary artists is “sexy”.¹⁹ But isn’t making sexy art exhibitions, seductive museums, and tempting architecture a rather meagre challenge? Museums can function as sites that provide the indispensable spatial and temporal enclave to study the inflationary field of culture from the sidelines and that install the necessary temporal margin to decide what in the end may be worth preserving, to decide which things we want to remember, after all.

Contemporary art runs the risk of disappearing in the visual sludge of our culture, or in what Hal Foster has rightly labelled as the “total design culture”.²⁰ When every fringe, rough edge, or unnecessary remnant – whether of an interior, a body, or a company – is neatly smoothed away and subjected to an appropriate design solution, we end up in a situation of *indifference*. When everything is streamlined, polished, and, above all, stylized to perfection, there is no margin left for culture, and art in particular, to *distinguish* itself. Instead, its only task is to deliver artistic *surplus*. In the current era of the total blending of artistic disciplines, the dissolution of institutional domains, and the liquidation of critical distances, it seems all the more important to create temporal and spatial enclaves that allow for distinction, that afford room for *difference*. If art is one of the few domains where one can still work and research with some measure of freedom and independence on the meanings that constitute our contemporary culture and society, then the museum remains one of the most appropriate sites to discuss the results of that investigation, seriously, and most of all, publicly. Its public constitution guarantees that the discussion never reaches a consensus, but maintains a status of critical *dissensus*. And it is precisely at this point that one can see a valuable role for architecture to play. If the museum remains one of the pre-eminent places for bringing art up for discussion, for negotiating and disputing its public nature, then architecture can contribute to the specificity of that debate. Architecture can never participate in the debate, neither anticipate its unpredictability, nor guarantee it a smooth progress. Architecture can only create the conditions to “ground” it, provide concrete parameters. Architecture is the medium *par excellence* for demarcating a specific space, differentiating a certain

area within the ever increasing and nebular field of cultural production, and for defining and materialising the boundaries of the framework within which the museum can deploy its institutional programme. Then again, it is up to the museums to let it interfere. But that requires *guts*, and, as Stephen Weil once laconically remarked, “Courage is rarely an institutional quality.”²¹ It is easier to bother architecture, than being bothered by it. It requires less bravery to molest and demolish a building than to cope with it, to think *through* it. Maybe Broodthaers was right when he stated that museums are eternal playgrounds.²² But even that doesn’t rule out architecture. Even a game needs rules and boundaries. And that makes it all the more dismal to attack architecture over and over *again*.

Notes

¹ For a brilliant discussion of the way these gestures use architecture to critique the institutional conditioning of exhibition spaces, see the last chapter “The gallery as a gesture” that was added to the 1999 edition of Brian O’Doherty’s *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999).

² Buchloh, Benjamin H. D.; “Cargo and Cult: the Displays of Thomas Hirschhorn”, in: *Artforum-International* 40; no.3, nr.v, 2001, pp. 109-110.

³ Blotkamp, Carel (ed.); *Museum in zmotion? : the modern art museum at issue / Museum in zbeweging? : het museum voor moderne kunst ter discussie*, (s-Gravenhage: Govt. Pub. Office, 1979). The most remarkable difference between the book and the symposium, however, was a peculiar feature of the title of the book. It may be regarded as a detail, but the questions marks that the editors of the book *Museum in Motion* put in the title in 1979, were left in the designation of the 2003 conference. The editors of the book not only put a question mark at the end of the title, but also a reversed the one before the word “motion”. Although this may be considered as a mere typographical joke, it represents the then “disputable” state of the museum discussion. At that moment in time, there was still lot of discussion, conflict, and disagreement about the question if the museum of modern and contemporary art could be set in motion, and how this had to happen. I used the title *Museum in zmotion?* again for a conference I organized in November 2004 in Sittard and Maastricht, The Netherlands. To consult the programme, visit: <http://www.museuminmotion.tk>

⁴ In the meantime, all three museums have new directors: Sjarel Ex at the Boijmans, Charles Esche at the Van Abbemuseum and Gijs Van Tuijl at the Stedelijk.

⁵ Weil, Stephen E.; “A Brief Meditation on Museums and the Metaphor of Institutional Growth”, in Weil, Stephen E.(ed.); *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Inquiries into Museums and their Prospects*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995) p. 42.

⁶ The most recent expansion of the Boijmans van Beuningen by the architects Robbrecht & Daem was already its fourth building campaign. For a discussion of that project, see Davidts, Wouter; “Robbrecht en Daem and the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen. Architectural Interventions so that Things May Overlap” in: *Maandberichten Museum Boijmans van Beuningen*, (nr.mei 2003)pp. 2-7.

⁷ Lowry, Glenn D.; “The New Museum of Modern Art Expansion: A Process of Discovery” in Elderfield (ed.); *Imagining the Future of the Museum of Modern Art*, (New York, Museum of modern art / Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998) p.21. This discourse is often enhanced by the rhetoric of the architects themselves. See for example, Rem Koolhaas O.M.A., *Charrette. M(OMA) 1997*, (Rotterdam / New York: Office for Metropolitan Architecture, 1997) n.p.: “Throughout its history the Museum of Modern Art had used architecture as a vehicle of self-expression and regeneration, articulating and re-articulating its evolving understanding of modern art in built form...At no other time since its founding has the Museum had such a unique opportunity to undertake so extensive a redefinition of itself.”

⁸ For a discussion of an architectural project that did engage itself with the definition of the museological program through an architectural design, see my discussion of the design of Xaveer De Geyter Architecten for the Antwerp Historical Museum or Museum Aan de Stroom (MAS): Davidts, Wouter; “The Museum as Warehouse” in Bekaert, Geert (ed.); *Xaveer De Geyter Architects. 12 projects*, (Gent / Amsterdam : Ludion, 2001)pp.36-39.

⁹ Broodthaers, Marcel ; "Dix Mille Francs de Récompense. Une interview d'Irmline Libeer" in Gevaert, Yves (ed.); *Marcel Broodthaers. Catalogue - Catalogus*, (Bruxelles, Société des Expositions du Palais des beaux arts de Bruxelles, 1974)p.66 : "En effet, le loup dit chaque fois qu'il est ailleurs, et cependant il est là. Et l'on sait qu'il va se retourner et attraper quelqu'un. La recherche constante d'une définition de l'espace ne servirait qu'à cacher la structure essentielle de l'Art, un processus de réification."

¹⁰ Banham, Reyner; *The Pompidolium* in *Architectural Review*, nr.963 (May, 1977)pp.277-278.

¹¹ Wittlin, Alma Stephanie; *Museums: In Search of a Usable Future*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970)p.1.

¹² These issues are in the 1979 *Museum in ¿Motion?* book still formulated as the "major problems" that museums are facing by Hans Haks in the introduction. If we take a closer look at the questions, it becomes immediately clear that a lot of them, if not the majority, seem no longer to be a true issue of discussion. Would there be anyone to argue that the museum should deal with visual arts only, or with theater, music, literature, architecture and dance as well? Or that the museum should engage with "high art" only, or with any cultural phenomenon? Let alone that someone would contest the idea that a museum should organize temporary exhibitions. Or, just imagine that we would question the idea that the museum's activities are delimited to its own building. And, finally, who on earth would contest the idea that a museum commissions artworks?

¹³ Alloway, Lawrence and Coplans, John; "Talking with William Rubin" in *Artforum*, (October 1974) as reprinted in Blotkamp, Carel (ed.); *Museum in 'motion': the modern art museum at issue / Museum in 'beweging': het museum voor moderne kunst ter discussie*, (s-Gravenhage Netherlands, Govt. Pub. Office, 1979)pp.311-319.

¹⁴ Helen Searing, "The Brillo Box in the Warehouse: Museums of Contemporary Art and Industrial Conversions" in Weingartner, Fannia (ed.); *The Andy Warhol Museum*, (Pittsburgh / New York / Stuttgart: Andy Warhol Museum / D.A.P. / Cantz, 1994)pp.39-65 .

¹⁵ The popularity of the loft stems from the idea that it is an "original" or "authentic" space for the art of recent decades: it "belongs there". As much art, from Minimalism onwards, has been made in industrial spaces – such as lofts – it is frequently said to be fitting to exhibit these works in similar spaces. See for example: Foster, Hal; "Illuminated Structure, Embodied Space" in Gluckman, Richard (ed.); *Space Framed: Richard Gluckman, Architect* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2000)p.184. For an extended critique of the loft as the new typology, see Davidts, Wouter; "Musea en de belofte van artistieke productie. Van Centre Pompidou tot Tate Modern" in: *De Witte Raaf*, nr.101, (2003)pp.7-11.

¹⁶ Lampugnani, Vittorio Magnago; "The Architecture of Art: The Museums of the 1990s" in Lampugnani (ed.); *Museums for a New Millennium*, (Munich: Prestel, 1999)p.13.

¹⁷ Price, Cedric; *Re:CP* (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag AG, 2003)p.63.

¹⁸ Keenan, Thomas; "No Ends in Sight" in Borja-Villel, Manuel J. and Hanhardt, John G. and Keenan, Thomas (eds.); *The End(s) of the Museum / Els límits des museu*, (Barcelona: Fundació Antonio Tàpies, 1995)pp.19.

¹⁹ The irony being that in the meanwhile, Esche has become the director of the Van Abbemuseum.

²⁰ Foster, Hal; *Design and Crime and Other Diatribes*, (London / New York:Verso, 2002).

²¹ Weil, Stephen E.; *A Cabinet of Curiosities. Inquiries into Museums and Their Prospects*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

²² Broodthaers, Marcel; *Lettre Ouverte*, (Département des Aigles, Dusseldorf, 19 September 1968), reprinted in Blotkamp (ed.); *Museum In ¿Motion?*, p. 250.